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SUBJECT: Nepal's Forthcoming Elections: What the U.S. Can Do to Help

REF: A) Kathmandu 1546, B) Kathmandu 1348

1. Nepal is preparing to hold national elections beginning November 13, followed by local elections sometime around April, 2003. The ongoing violent Maoist insurgency will complicate security arrangements and increase expenditures at a time when economic conditions are deteriorating. Moreover, recent natural calamities resulting from unusually heavy monsoon rains have worsened the resource crunch. Without significant foreign support, Nepal will not be able to hold the elections, let alone create an environment where the results will be considered free, fair and legitimate by the electorate.

2. Ref A related the UN's plans for election assistance for the November Parliamentary elections and passed on its request for aid and its call for donor nations to sponsor election observers. Ref B related the National Election Commission's request for material assistance. Additionally, Post has been contacted by a number of NGOs with proposals for election assistance. Brief summaries are included at paragraph 4. We have ranked in priority order those the Embassy considers the most worth funding. These programs are ready to go, and lack only the resources to implement them. The Embassy strongly urges that the Department fund these programs. Most of these programs target the national elections, and additional resources should be added to provide similar support for the local elections in the Spring.

3. Proposals A, B and C are expansions of existing programs that USAID or State has already funded. If additional money were made available for these programs, USAID could channel the funds to the relevant organizations with minimal paperwork. In order for USAID to obligate funds this fiscal year to the proposed programs, specific approved funding levels have to be notified to Congress by September 3.

4. Proposals to support elections in Nepal:

A. Local-level Public Meetings (\$75,000)

The Asia Foundation (TAF)

USAID is already providing TAF \$125,000 for this project. An additional \$75,000 would allow for two meetings per constituency instead of one, and for the program to be extended to twenty additional constituencies, for a total of 170 instead of 150 of Nepal's total of 205 constituencies.

B. Voter Education (\$255,000)

National Democratic Institute (NDI)

USAID is already providing NDI \$125,000 for this project. An additional \$255,000 will allow additional voter education materials to be provided in all of Nepal's 75 districts, and for ten local NGOs to conduct village-level campaigns using NDI materials.

C. Expansion of Electoral Observer Program (No Estimate)
Consortium for Elections and Political Process
Strengthening (CEPPS)

Post has tagged \$164,000 of FY 2002 ESF monies for international, regional or local observers funded through USAID's CEPPS program. Additional funding would allow for more election observers. Post notes that it is still awaiting Department approval of its requested ESF funding for FY 2002.

D. Regional International Observers (94,000)

TAF, through the Bangkok-based Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL), would provide thirty observers from South, Southeast and East Asia. [Note: As with D, E and F, below, cost includes \$38,000 for an International Elections Consultant (IEC). Were more than one of these four programs to be funded, the IEC cost could be shared among them. End Note.]

E. Local Long-term International Observers (\$255,000)

TAF would train and deploy twenty-five locally-based expatriates as observers over the course of the elections, estimated at six weeks. [Note: The International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES) and the Carter

Center have also expressed interest in sending international observers, but have not yet offered an estimate of projected expenses. End Note.]

F. Expatriate Election-day Observers (\$46,000)
TAF would organize and deploy volunteer expatriate observers on election day only.

G. Election Monitoring (\$355,000)
NDI would support a total of about 25 individuals, including long-term, short-term and post-election monitors, and one-day training workshops on poll monitoring for political parties and NGOs. [Note: Funds in support of this program could be channeled through USAID's central electoral support project (CEPPF). End Note.]

H. Regional Election Reporting (\$30,000)
TAF would support the Center for Investigative Journalism in Nepal to establish a special cell for election coverage.

5. It is clearly in the USG interest to support the holding of free and fair elections at this critical period of Nepal's democratic development. Both domestic and international resources committed to date are inadequate to meet the requirements of two major sets of elections within six months. Post urges immediate consideration of additional funding to enable the USG to demonstrate its support for Nepal's fledgling democracy.

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